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New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/968)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of December, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal, for his service as President of the Council for the month of November. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Seck and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/968)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Per Thöresson, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden and representative of the Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Ms. Victoria Wollie, National Coordinator for the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding — Women in Peacebuilding Network in Liberia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/968, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to present to the Security Council the Secretary-General's special report on Liberia (S/2016/968). I would like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation for the long-standing support that the Council has given Liberia, in particular through the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

As members are aware, the strategic assessment of Liberia is the third and final such exercise we conducted in West Africa this year, which collectively have resulted in what I think is a reshaping of the peacekeeping footprint in the region. As the report indicates, the political environment in Liberia is dominated by preparations for the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 2017. That should lead to the inauguration of the next President in January 2018, which will mark a historic milestone for Liberia's democracy. Peaceful and successful elections and post-election leadership transition will be key to ensuring Liberia's stability. What happens next year, therefore, will be critical. It will demonstrate whether the foundations of peace that we have been building since the conflict ended 13 years ago are strong enough to be sustained. It is incumbent upon the people and the Government of Liberia, with support from their partners, to ensure that measures are put in place now to deliver free, fair, transparent and credible elections, the outcomes of which are accepted by all.

There have been some promising developments on the political front since September, when we undertook the assessment that provided the basis for the report of the Secretary-General. At that time, an ongoing standoff within the House of Representatives had effectively stalled the legislative agenda, including reforms that were essential for sustaining peace. As it happened, however, on 5 October, the House of Representatives elected a new Speaker, who announced that he would focus on improving the relationships and coordination with Government so as to make progress on the development agenda.

On 8 November, the legislature reconvened for a one-month extraordinary session, in the midst of its annual recess, in order to advance work on critical legislation. For instance, it adopted the Land Authority Act and ratified 32 Economic Community of West African States protocols and conventions, including on democracy and good governance. The legislature also considered constitutional amendments submitted by the President more than a year ago, as well as a package of legislation on land reform, economic and financial frameworks and counter-terrorism. I think that demonstrates the commitment of elected

representatives to deliver results to their constituents. We look forward to seeing further concrete progress in advancing the legislative agenda.

There was also some realignment among the political parties. In November, three major opposition parties formed the Coalition for Democratic Change in order to challenge the ruling Unity Party in the October elections next year.

In a nutshell, Liberia remains stable. Since the conclusion of the security transition in June, there have been no serious incidents that have warranted the intervention of UNMIL. Indeed, there have been no incidents that have justified an armed response from UNMIL in the entirety of 2016. The assessment team, led by my colleague Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, was particularly impressed by the commitment and determination of the national security personnel. Despite facing serious constraints with respect to finances, logistics and basic equipment, the women and men that make up the national security personnel demonstrated resolve in performing their sovereign responsibilities of protecting the population and securing the State.

The security agencies have continued to develop. The Liberia National Police has increased its strength since the assessment was conducted. The Drug Enforcement Agency has conducted important operations in partnership with INTERPOL. The national police and immigration services are considering new legislation that, if implemented, will help consolidate professional law enforcement institutions with strong civilian oversight mechanisms to protect the public against any abuses. However, sustaining those gains that have been made will require continued and greater investment in the security sector, as well as commensurate improvements in the justice and corrections sectors.

The Government of Liberia has many priorities to address in the final year of the present Administration in order to ensure that it hands over to the next Administration a country that is truly on the path of transformation. There are many political and institutional reforms that must be adopted and implemented. Security and defence institutions require continued development. Democratic oversight mechanisms must be established and equipped to effectively perform their roles. A human rights institution must be established with an expanded mandate, which requires that there be adequate capacities and resources in order for that institution to perform its mandate. Citizens continue to expect to receive the most basic services from their Government. Let us not forget that there is a major electoral process on the horizon, which will require considerable resources.

All of those, and other, priorities must be taken forward in a very limited fiscal space. Eighty-seven per cent of the approximately $600 million national budget is earmarked for recurrent expenses. We know that the economic environment is one of complete austerity that features negligible growth projections. Since the Secretary-General's special report was published, the Government has instructed all ministries, agencies and other governmental bodies to save an additional 5 per cent from their approved budgets.

Two years ago, the Council set a deadline for the full assumption of UNMIL's security responsibilities by national institutions. That decision was a remarkable demonstration of confidence that the country had overcome the instability and dependency of the past. It was no small challenge for a fragile country that was freshly emerging from the devastation of Ebola, which the Council recognized as a threat to international peace and stability. However, the Liberian institutions rose to that challenge and met the 30 June deadline for the security transition.

After a careful assessment of the progress and remaining challenges, the Secretary-General's special report outlines three possible options regarding the future of UNMIL, taking into account the parameters provided by the Council, namely, the security situation in the country and Liberia's overall capacity to maintain stability. Those options are as follows: first, there is the option of withdrawing UNMIL and establishing a successor mission; secondly, there is the option of maintaining the status quo; and, thirdly, there is the option of continuing the drawdown of UNMIL.

Irrespective of the Council's decision, it would, in our view, be important that Liberia remain on the Council's agenda through the establishment of the next Administration. We will engage closely with that Administration in developing recommendations on the future of the engagement of the United Nations in Liberia beyond June 2018. Over the next 18 months, it will be necessary to retain a mission that is able to provide strong good offices and political support, mentoring of the security and rule-of-law institutions, as well as human rights monitoring and capacity-building. Although we have full confidence in the

ability of the national security services, we consider it essential that there remain some capacity to respond, in extremis, should there be a deterioration of stability that entails a strategic reversal.

Therefore, for each of the three options outlined in the Secretary-General's special report, a crucial aspect of our contingency planning is the quick reaction force, which is presently in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire. That unit will transfer to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali when the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire ends early next year. As the Council is aware, that unit has a mandate to provide over-the-horizon support for Liberia in support of the front-line response of the Liberian security and defence forces. The Council may also recall that part of that unit was deployed to the Central African Republic last year, where it provided remarkable and essential support during the visit of His Holiness the Pope, to Bangui, as well as in preparation of the country's presidential elections.

The assessment team also heard the call made by members of Liberian civil society that we undertake serious introspection about our failures in Liberia with a view to moving forward on the basis of mutual accountability through the elaboration of a compact, as we have just done on an experimental basis in the Central African Republic. That compact would establish a framework of mutual accountability, which would strengthen the partnership and future engagement between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations.

Throughout its history, Liberia has been a country that has demonstrated remarkable resilience and a great ability to overcome seemingly unsurmountable adversity. Liberians are a people who have endured — and are still enduring — the devastation wrought by more than a century of systemic exclusion, decades of dysfunction and 14 years of successive, brutal civil wars. Not so long ago, they were confronted with the national tragedy of Ebola for over a year. And yet, the country continues to transcend adversity. It must continue on its path of positive transformation.

The people and the Government of Liberia must take forward the essential work of building a nation — a unified, reconciled nation with an accountable Government committed to addressing corruption within its ranks; a nation where all citizens share the benefits of Liberia's abundant natural resources; a nation fully responsible for its own destiny, with institutions and a Government that provide the basic guarantees of security, protection and services to its citizens.

Clearly, we are now in the final stretch of the life cycle of UNMIL. Both the Liberians and their partners would stand to gain by ending this cycle as soon as possible so that Liberia can fully take upon itself the responsibilities of a sovereign State. But precisely because it is the final stretch, it must be handled with delicacy and prudence. We must keep in mind that the success of UNMIL will be assessed not only on the basis of the impressive results achieved in just under 13 years, but also on the way UNMIL withdraws from Liberia and, maybe above all, on the perception that the Liberians will retain after its has left.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. To that end, let me take this opportunity to remind speakers that the presidency will use the flashing lights on the collars of the microphones to prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to Mr. Thöresson.

Mr. Thöresson: I thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Let me also congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of December.

We meet at a pivotal point in time, ahead of the Security Council's decision on the future of the United Nations peacekeeping presence in Liberia. It therefore gives me great pleasure to present the conclusions and recommendations emanating from a recent trip to Liberia and a multi-stakeholder forum on sustaining peace through transition in Liberia, hosted by the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Liberia.

The objective of the visit was to identify peacebuilding priorities during the transition and beyond the peacekeeping presence in the country, and to complement the atrategic assessment mission led

by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Chair met with the President of Liberia, several senior representatives of the Government, civil society, the United Nations leadership, members of the international community and political parties. The written report from the trip has been shared with the Security Council.

Two main questions guided the deliberations in Monrovia: first, what must be done to address remaining root causes of conflict in Liberia and, secondly, what should international support look like after the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)? Let me highlight the key conclusions.

First of all, while no one seems to believe that Liberia is facing an imminent risk of relapsing into conflict, there was general agreement that the root causes and potential triggers of conflict in Liberia remain unresolved and demand concerted attention. Reconciliation has not yet fully taken place — which was also acknowledged by the President himself. The nation has yet to address the grievances of a large marginalized majority, and must also go back to implementing the road map for national reconciliation.

Strong political leadership is required to fully and comprehensively address reconciliation in Liberia. In that connection, the need to forge a common national identity was identified and stressed repeatedly at the multi-stakeholder forum. That tells us that reconciliation in Liberia goes beyond coming to terms with what took place during the civil war. Building social cohesion requires addressing historical inequalities and unequal access to resources and power. That, in turn, relates to the need of extending State authority beyond Monrovia, providing basic social services in rural communities, forging a stronger relationship between the State and its citizens and building trust in security institutions.

It is encouraging to note some degree of progress on legislative reforms essential to peacebuilding and State-building, including those concerning land rights, decentralization and governance. However, while some progress has been made in the legislative process, certain regulations still need to be passed, and we must continue to monitor the situation. The passing of the Land Rights Act would not only address crucial property rights, but would also help reform the agricultural sector in Liberia, which is falling short of delivering on its potential. Government leadership is needed to promote structural reform as a critical preventive measure before the elections. Another message emanating from the forum is that critical gaps remain in institutional capacity. The rule of law remains weak and access to justice constitutes an ongoing challenge.

The large disenfranchised youth constitutes a real risk factor. Making jobs available for youth, engaging them and ensuring meaningful channels for participation is important — not least now in the run-up to the elections. The right support should be provided to ensure that the youth can play an active role in peacebuilding.

That leads me to another key point of discussion during the PBC visit — the presidential and legislative election in October 2017. The election was described as a defining moment for Liberia, as the first democratic transfer of power from one living president to another since it became a republic. A successful election and peaceful transition would further consolidate democracy and good governance.

As is often the case, the running of an election is fraught with the risk of tensions. More than 20 candidates are running for President. Efforts to establish solid mechanisms for dispute resolution early on, as well as drafting joint codes of conduct and managing run-offs, should be supported and prioritized. We understand that UNMIL is heavily involved in such efforts, along with the National Election Commission, both providing crucial support. Other priorities in preparing for a successful election are civic education, awareness-raising and outreach to a largely disenfranchised population. A special focus on the active participation of women is needed. Several interlocutors in Monrovia noted that it would be premature to withdraw the peacekeeping Mission before the elections. Even a smaller presence, with police contingents could play an important role.

It is important to be aware of the current socioeconomic situation in which the election and transition will take place. The Liberian economy is under considerable stress, in the aftermath of both Ebola and the downturn in prices of iron ore and rubber. Economic growth has not increased at all over the past three years, and the International Monetary Fund projection for 2016 is -0.5 per cent. That limits the fiscal space available for taking forward critical peacebuilding reforms under the current Administration. Economic growth is dependent upon economic diversification, but the foundation is weak. The economy faces huge challenges, such as the decline in Government revenue,

overreliance on concessions, social exclusion in the governance structure and the need for structural reforms to improve the business environment. During the visit, daunting statistics regarding education were presented: 63 per cent of Liberian children are not attending school. This is a key challenge today with real implications for the future.

Where does that leave us? Liberia is facing an incredibly important year in 2017, with a defining election. Many root causes remain unaddressed. After the peacekeepers withdraw, there will be residual peacebuilding tasks — some of which address root causes of conflict that remain unresolved in Liberia and require sustained international support. Those factors should be borne in mind when the future of the United Nations presence beyond December 2016 is decided. Given 13 years of massive investment in UNMIL, it will be important to ensure a responsible and careful drawdown that safeguards the gains and achievements made and sends Liberia on a stable and robust path towards the further consolidation of peace. The United Nations leadership in Monrovia still plays a key role. Preserving the function of its good offices will be useful during the period when there will be a heightened risk of tension in the lead-up and during the elections next year.

In conclusion, it is crucial to maintain international attention on Liberia at this critical time. An immediate task is to ensure that the remaining United Nations presence is set up and resourced to respond to the continuous need for peacebuilding support. The PBC therefore encourages the entire United Nations system to intensify collaborative and strategic planning, and looks forward to engaging in a regular dialogue with the stakeholders on how that is proceeding and to offer further support.

For its part, the Commission stands ready to continue its political accompaniment by ensuring continued international attention on Liberia, in the event that Liberia leaves the agenda of the Security Council, and assisting by drawing attention to gaps. The PBC is committed to making substantive contributions to the Council's deliberations, and those of us who have dual membership in the Council and the PBC will make sure to play our part in strengthening our advisory and bridging role. The PBC will also undertake continued advocacy on the importance of pursuing reforms that are central to State-building and sustainable peace in Liberia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Thöresson for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Wollie.

Ms. Wollie: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council and speak on behalf of Liberian women and women's organizations. I would like to thank the Spanish Ambassador in particular, not only for opening up this space for the voice of civil society, but for Spain's leadership in the Security Council on the women and peace and security agenda over the past two years.

Liberia is at a critical junction as the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continues its drawdown. That coincides with the upcoming 2017 electoral processes. UNMIL played a major role in the 2005 and 2011 elections, providing up to 70 per cent of security and logistical support in many ways, such as airlifting ballot boxes where there was no road access and augmenting security.

As I speak to the Council today, I am expressing the fears of the women of Liberia regarding security and logistical gaps without UNMIL, which could present challenges that could be exploited by unscrupulous politicians to question the credibility of the elections, thereby triggering unwanted violence. On behalf of the women of Liberia, I call on the Security Council to take that into consideration when discussing the future of the United Nations presence in Liberia, especially for the 2017 election and the period immediately following.

Another major security concern for women and girls is the proliferation of illicit drugs in the country, which especially affects young people and ex-combatants. Many of those young people are involved in various crimes, such as sexual and gender-based violence, armed robbery and mob violence. That is a serious security threat as UNMIL draws down. It requires support for an effective national response to those problems, from enhancement of law enforcement capacity to better programmes for treatment and rehabilitation. Those will contribute to peace consolidation.

As the international community prepares to assist Liberia in the conduct of presidential and legislative elections, please remember that women's representation in the national legislature and in local districts is extremely low. While the lack of major security incidents is proof that UNMIL has completed its mission and can leave, please remember that sexual and

gender-based violence continues to be the number one crime reported to the police. As the report (S/2016/968) of the Secretary-General notes, in the more than 1,500 cases of rape registered in 2014 and 2015, less than 4 per cent of the alleged perpetrators were convicted, and that trend has continued in 2016.

In Liberia women and girls are victims of harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and abductions and forcible initiations into secret societies. As we place our hopes in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, please remember that less than 9 per cent of Liberian girls complete secondary education, and that part of the reason for that is because they are exposed to alarming levels of violence, abuse and exploitation in schools.

Liberian women need the Peacebuilding Commission to fill any gaps left by the possible departure of the peacekeeping Mission. In the past few years, the Peacebuilding Fund has invested in the work of women's organizations in Liberia. With its support, women-led peace huts have served as a safe spaces for women and contributed to resolving local conflicts for years. We hope that that type of support will be scaled up so that women can participate in peaceful elections and help to strengthen national reconciliation, the rule of law, the security sector and an equitable management of natural resources. Those are the kinds of investments that will secure Liberia's path to peace consolidation.

With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, Liberian women, over the years, have developed the resolve to stand up for their rights, and have seen a show of solidarity in the passing of the rape law, domestic violence act and the affirmative action act. That kind of solidarity is also being exhibited as Liberian women review the 2005 manifesto and update the 2017 manifesto, identifying and making recommendations on issues that are important to women and girls in Liberia.

Increased funding to women and women civil society organizations will maximize the potential of Liberian women and the efforts being made by the international community and the Government to consolidate peace in Liberia. Inclusive community-based early-warning initiatives that engage women as early-warning monitors will enhance conflict prevention in Liberia during the transition and beyond. We can build on the Economic Community of West African States Conflict Prevention Framework, which includes the National Early Warning System and National Response Mechanism.

A landmark study that looked at 70 countries over four decades concluded that the most effective way to reduce violence against women was the strength of women's organizations or women's movement in any given country. The international community has celebrated, in this forum and many others, the heroic contribution of Liberian women to ending the civil war, helping disarm the armed groups, conduct peaceful elections, prevent a relapse into conflict and defeat the deadly Ebola epidemic. I represent those women here today. I can tell the Council that there is no more meaningful tribute to Liberian women than the long-lasting and sustained partnership of the international community. I hope that we will not be forgotten and that the Council will continue to partner with us. If we are strong, peace in Liberia will be strong.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Wollie for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous for his briefing, and the Department for Peacekeeping Operations for the strategic assessment carried out in the Republic of Liberia. We are also grateful to the Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and to Victoria Wollie.

Uruguay is troubled by the situation in Liberia, not just the current situation but also what could happen in the future with high indicators of school dropout, youth unemployment, an inefficient State aparatus and economic crisis — open wounds from the past.

The results of the strategic assessment present us with a range of options for the future regarding the presence of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). However, we understand that the challenges Liberia is currently facing will likely remain and befall UNMIL or, sooner or later, befall the presence of the United Nations. In that regard, we believe that the Government and the people of Liberia should focus efforts on building capacities to create better opportunities in the long-term with a view to building their own capacities and putting an end to their dependency position.

However, the presidential and legislative elections to be held in October constitute be a major landmark, during which time the international community will need to keep close watch over the process and be present in supporting the Liberian people. To that end, Uruguay believes it is necessary to maintain the presence of UNMIL at least until after the upcoming elections. The Mission will need to maintain some kind of structure in order to act in the event of a deterioration of the situation. For example, we are inclined towards option 3, but after Council members reviewed the Secretariat's assessment to outline a presence that would achieve peace in the country and protect, uphold and defend human rights, it would ultimately have to act in a scenario of dire or imminent instability. Therefore, it is important for the Council to continue working closely with the Swedish Ambassador as Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to ensure the implementation of the recently adopted resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

Finally, we believe that peace in Liberia can be achieved and sustained only through improving the institutions guaranteeing national stability with a truly inclusive process and national ownership, thereby addressing the root causes that divide the population with a view to achieving national reconciliation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Brown (Liberia): I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to participate in the briefing.

Essentially, the defining question of the current engagement of the Council is how and, importantly, when can a transition from full peacekeeping operations occur so that Liberia's progress and the success achieved at such high costs in lives and treasure are not unnecessarily risked and regrettably undermined. As to the important question of how, a number of measures have been recommended by the Secretary-General in defining the possible mandate of a successor mission. The Liberian Government finds those measures to be largely favourable. In response to the critical question of when, the Liberian Government is proposing an extension through a period of one year. Only one more year to continue the phased withdrawal. One more year to enable our recovering and reforming institutions to continue to stand up as United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) draws down. One more year of the presence of UNMIL, which represents to many Liberians a brand of confidence that would assist in mitigating, if not deterring, the real risk of a disruption during the country's most sensitive political period. Only one more year of working together in what for Liberia is a successful partnership to properly prepare for a successor mission and a democratically elected Government to continue the useful partnership and build upon the progress we have already made.

We understand the many concerns associated with our request for an extension. There are concerns about increasing dependencies by national institutions on the international community. There are concerns that a request for an extension may become recurring. There are concerns that the resources contributed to UNMIL are needed elsewhere, including in more troubled spots in Africa and around the world. Those truly are reasonable concerns.

The failure of the Liberian State, which necessitated the deployment of UNMIL, also occasioned the greatest collapse in the productive capacity of any nation since the Second World War — an estimated collapse of more than 90 per cent. Corroded over time, national institutions were not simply defaced and rendered dysfunctional, they were effectively eviscerated. Dwindling public confidence was altogether lost, and hope in a democratic future was non-existent.

Of course we have come a long way, thanks to the continued support of those present. That notwithstanding, we intend to meet our target of an 8,000-strong police force, fully deployed all across the country from its current strength of 5,100, and to ensure a continuous commitment of the police and all other security institutions to training, including on the important element of safeguarding human rights and improved professional standards. The nearly 2,600 immigration officers will be further strengthened with the completion of training facilities in northern Liberia with a training capacity of 1,000 officers. And we are proud that our military is growing in professional competence with support especially from the United States and other friendly Governments, and with mentoring from Economic Community of West African States. Access to justice, which was non-existent in many parts of the country, is improving. Our security institutions are demonstrating signs of increasing readiness to stand up as UNMIL stands down.

To have UNMIL, such a confidence brand, walk with Liberia for only one more year through this last

mile is an added guarantee and priceless insurance, which completes the United Nations Mission of keeping the peace not only by the separation of belligerents, but, importantly, also through a more meaningful transformation of Liberia from a failed State to a thriving democracy.

Indeed resources are finite. And yes, there are growing needs in other parts of the world, including on the African continent, for the resources of UNMIL. We continue to consider the situation seriously and take the needed steps within the limits of our means to be removed from a dependence on UNMIL. And the truth also is that the lack of resources, or the growing need in other parts of the world for the resources of UNMIL, must necessarily compel all of us — the Liberian Government and the Security Council — to bring this successful Mission to an end in a way that may not require a return to the Security Council, nor will the Security Council perceive a reason to redeploy peacekeeping resources to Liberia in the foreseeable future. In that regard, the potential risks, especially pertaining to the conduct of unprecedented elections, to which the recent assessment report (S/2016/968) of the Secretary-General refers and the Peace Building Commission alludes, should be avoided.

Whatever decision the Council takes, the truth is that today Liberia is a better country — a more peaceful and secure nation. We intend to keep it that way. Again, we are grateful to the Security Council, the other agencies of the United Nations as well as our many bilateral and multilateral partners for their continued support. We know that, because of their priceless investments in Liberia's peace and security, today Liberians are increasingly hopeful and imbued with a growing desire and a more realistic impulse, at home and across the diaspora, to be the builders of our future and the masters of our destiny. We know we were brought to our knees by the prolonged tragedies of self-implosion. But no nation has been more desperate to recover. Again, we were recently ravaged by Ebola, and are currently shackled by an economy under severe stress. But the resiliency of our Liberian character — our will to overcome — must never be taken for granted.

Even so, Liberia cannot afford another major shock to our recovery. We simply cannot afford to ignore the possibility, however remote, of another risk to our ongoing recovery efforts. One more year is all that we believe we will need to deter the looming risk: one more year to afford a new Administration of the Liberian Government the security it would need to continue the recovery and reform processes without the baggage of an inherited sense of insecurity.

We are really at the end of a long walk together through UNMIL. We know it has been difficult, but it has been worthwhile. It has lifted spirits, rekindled hope and brought a country back from the depths of its own self-destruction. That may not have been the mandate per se, but no one can deny that this United Nations Mission has been successful. Let us now end it as sustainably, as responsibly and as successfully as we know we possibly can.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.